Peggy *and* Patty;

OR,

THE SISTERS OF *ASHDALE.*

VOL. III.

BRITISH MUSEUM

1807

Peggy *and* Patty;

OR,

THE SISTERS OF *ASHDALE.*

THE SECOND EDITION.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. DODSLEY,
PALL-MALL.

M.DCC.LXXXIV.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PEGGY AND PATTY.

LETTER XVII.

Miſs Harvey to Mrs. Bennet.

Moſs-Hill.

MADAM,

I AM favoured with your's; the melancholy contents of which fill my ſad heart with inexpreſſible ſorrow, and which is ſtill aggravated by the mournful news I have to communicate. — Alas! madam,

your tender ſolicitude for poor Mrs. Summers, your anxious fears for her ſafety, and your generous bounty incloſed in your kind letter, now avail not:—ſhe is beyond the reach of all human pity; and I doubt not her gentle ſpirit has now joined that of her late moſt excellent huſband, in that happy abode "where the wicked ceaſe "from troubling, and where the "weary are at reſt."

But to lead to this afflicting event: My mother had the dear woman removed to our houſe immediately, on the dreadful news of her daughters being given up to infamy.

famy.—We imagined, under our own eye, our tender cares (for it was not proper *her* ſituation ſhould add to the anguiſh of her beloved huſband) might in ſome meaſure calm her griefs.—But oh! madam, vain were our tendereſt endeavours! She lay in a kind of ſtupor, which ſucceeded the fits ſhe was at firſt ſeized with:—we ſent for the beſt phyſician this country affords, who immediately declared nothing could be done:—ſhe languiſhed for about four days; (poor Mr. Summers that very morning ſet out on his deſperate journey to London)—and ſhe had never been heard to ſpeak ſince

the fatal letter arrived; when, about an hour before ſhe reſigned her innocent ſoul to heaven, ſhe awaked as from ſleep, and feebly held up her hand to beckon me to her:—I kneeled by her, with an *ineffectual* cordial in my hand:—"Peggy," ſaid ſhe, (miſtaking me for her daughter) in a faint ſort of whiſper, "do, my dear child, raiſe my "head:"—(you will imagine, madam, I did not *un*deceive the dear dying woman.) She continued,—"Pray, my dear, call Patty—bleſs "—God bleſs!"——ſhe fixed her eyes;—"O my heart—Peggy—"Patty"—were the laſt ſyllables which

which dwelt on her pallid lips!—ſhe reſigned her breath that moment in my arms:—I ſhrieked, and my mother flew to my aſſiſtance.

O madam!—but it is not for me to moralize (a young, inexperienced girl as I am) to a lady like yourſelf, ſo much more capable of giving me leſſons of reſignation.

The poor helpleſs children, the eldeſt not twelve years of age, are truly pitiable:—two of them my father has taken into our family, and their education ſhall be my care.—But, alas! my father, who, though a good man, is particularly *rigid* in regard to our ſex, has an-

nexed this hard condition to his above benevolence; that on *no account* whatever I hold in future the leaſt connexion with the abandoned Peggy and Patty;—with whom he is perfectly outrageous; calling them the murderers of their mother, &c.—and no doubt when he hears of poor Mr. Summers's death, *that* too will be laid to their charge, and I fear too juſtly.—My father, madam, is ſo much enraged againſt theſe wretched girls, that he has extorted a promiſe from me, on pain of his eternal diſpleaſure, that, be their diſtreſs what it will, in conſequence of their infamy

and

and ſhameful conduct—even ſhould they be, like other *proſtitutes* (do I live to write the horrid word?) reduced to the ſtreets—I ſhall in no ſhape relieve or countenance them: and peremptorily declares, that ſhould I diſobey him in this reſpect, he will for ever reprobate me—for ever renounce me—and turn theſe poor children, little Molly and Billy Summers, out of the houſe.—*Hard*, madam, is this!—very hard:—not but I moſt heartily deteſt the abominable conduct of my *once* (O that *once!*) innocent friends.—I am indeed, to ſay the truth, extremely exaſperated at their infa-

mous way of life:—and their unparalleled falſehood, good madam, in writing letters (as they have done) as from *your houſe*, when moſt likely they have been all the time in a brothel, is beyond all conception of artful wickedneſs. — The whole of their conduct is myſteriouſly amazing. —— I moſt certainly *have* given my ſolemn promiſe to my father (and likewiſe to my mother, whoſe notions of the delicacy of our ſex are high) according to the condition he has required: and yet, at the time I did ſo, a tremor invaded all my limbs; — my weak heart throbbed

with unuſual perturbation: — 'tis true, I *deteſt* the crime of theſe bad girls; but ah! madam, I PITY *them* as *fellow-creatures.*—At this moment my cheek is bathed in tears: — could I imagine *ſuch* tears would ever flow for my Peggy and Patty! Heavens! is it poſſible ſuch ſweetneſs,—ſuch piety,—innate modeſty, ſhould at once!——But I know not what I would ſay: — I am indeed almoſt diſtracted, when I think what angels, adorned with ſpotleſs innocence, they once were, and now ſunk—ſunk to the loweſt degree of infamy!

Surely, madam, the miſerable

girls

girls could not have been *trepanned* into this horrid way of life! — I would fain try to think them leſs culpable. — I almoſt ſhudder to think (if *that* has been the caſe) of my extorted vow, my ſolemn promiſe to my parents. —— But no — no — they muſt be vile — baſe — how elſe can it be that they now live in the manner you, madam, ſay they do?

O what a wide-ſpreading error is this horrid vice of ſeduction!—the young, credulous girl, who is weak enough to be ſeduced, is not the only ſuffering perſon: —the dreadful conſequences extend much,

much

much farther :—a diſtracted father, —a dying mother—a little, ruined, helpleſs family of children left to periſh. — Theſe are too frequently the *conſequences* of ſeduction, I believe, were we to *look* into the *families* where it has been practiſed ; whilſt the criminal, deluded girls are at length, when ſatiety and diſeaſe prevails (the common conſequences of their guilty commerce) turned adrift to periſh in the ſtreets.

The family of this moſt worthy Mr. Summers muſt, like many others in ſimilar circumſtances, have been doomed to the utmoſt diſtreſs, but for the hope that you,

good

good madam, (as you moſt generouſly intimate) will think of ſomething in their favour: — two are with us; and the remainder of the little helpleſs group are now diſtributed among ſome kind, but poor farmers in the neighbourhood: —my heart is pierced with anguiſh to hear the daily enquiries theſe little innocents make after their beloved father,—their tender mother. ——Alas!——

Be aſſured I ſhall ever rank your friendſhip, madam, among my moſt valuable acquiſitions. And if a certain event, which I expect, relative to a change in my condition, ſhould take

take place, I ſhall be near London ſometimes; when I ſhall take every opportunity (if agreeable) of cultivating a more near acquaintance with ſo amiable a lady as Mrs. Bennet; and beg leave to ſubſcribe myſelf her very ſincere,

and obedient ſervant,

Emma Harvey.

[Whilſt the late melancholy deaths were happening, of the worthy Mr. Summers and his amiable wife, the unfortunate ſiſters were become quite *faſhionable ladies*, in dreſs and manners:—their preſent

keepers,

keepers, lord Racket and ſir Harry Ranger, *as yet* continued their vicious paſſion for them; and indulged them in every extravagance. But whilſt they were plunged in this ſhameful ſtate of infamy and diſſipation, we will, as a contraſt, inſert the following letter from the virtuous Emma Harvey; who had ſufficient fortitude to conquer an affection for the man ſhe loved, and, thro' duty to her parents, to give her hand where *they* thought moſt proper: — about this period ſhe wrote the following letter to her boſom-friend, Miſs Waller.]

LETTER XVIII.

Miſs Harvey to Miſs Waller.

Moſs-Hill.

SURELY, my Lucy, there is an inexpreſſible *ſomething* in a virtuous action, in its *every form*, which gives an *alacrity* to the mind, and wonderfully ſupports it in its moſt trying moments! — Do you know, my dear, that I feel a *ſatisfaction*— at leaſt a *ſelf-approbation*, that I have been enabled to triumph over my weakneſs, for the too amiable ſtranger at the Grove? Hard indeed,

deed, my friend, was the conflict; for well ſays the poet,

" Of all that e'er was taught a lover yet,
" 'Tis ſure the hardeſt ſcience to *forget:*
" Ere ſuch a ſoul regains its *peaceful* ſtate,
" How often muſt it *love*, how often *hate*,
" How oft deſpair, reſent, contemn, regret,
" Hope and deſire; do all things but *forget!*"

By *dint*, however, of *reaſoning*, I have at length brought this little, fooliſh, wayward heart of mine, to baniſh every idea of what (had it been much longer indulged) would perhaps have been productive of much diſquietude to my parents: as who knows, my Lucy, but I might have been ſo *fondly* ſimple as to have married this too amiable Edward?—

But

—But not another word about him.—

As another *proof* of the ſentiment at the beginning of my letter, I even find a *ſatisfaction* in behaving with as much *gratitude* as I can to Mr. Branville; *becauſe* I know I make, in accepting his addreſſes, my *parents* happy. And after all, my dear, perhaps we girls ſhall ſeldom find from a huſband, (except an *extraordinary good one)* all that tender ſolicitude, and real attention to our every various wiſh, that we in general experience from a conſiderate father and a tender mother. — "Prithee, "child, (you cry) leave *moralizing*, "and

" and tell me if Mr. Branville is re-
" covered from his fit of the gout?
" —if he has made his viſit?—and
" when I may expect a piece of
" bride-cake."

Well then, my dear, impatient friend:—Entirely free from his late gouty attack, and dreſt with the moſt formal exactneſs, my lover has made not only his firſt viſit, but two or three more ſince: and *they* ſeem (that is, my father, mother, and Mr. Branville) to be *hurrying on* at a ſtrange rate.

So much, however, do I *try* to *ſubmit* to my duty, that I think,—yes, I believe I ſhall live *tolerably*,

and *contentedly* with this man.—Some author, (in one of the books you lent me) I forget whom, ſays, "We often *like* what we do not *love*, and *love* what we do not *like*." This, ſome would ſay, is chopping logic, and merely playing upon words;—however, I have ſo far found the above ſeeming paradox true, that I really *like* Mr. Branville, tho' *indeed* I do not *love* him.—But I both *loved* and *liked* the amiable Ed------:—"Again!" you cry;—No, my dear, I will not finiſh his name—it flowed unawares to my pen.

But to proceed with my account

of Mr. Branville's firſt viſit: — He arrived at the *preciſe* moment he ſaid he ſhould, and was introduced to me by my father, in our tapeſtry parlour, where I ſat trembling, ready to receive him: — my father abruptly left the room, and I, girl-like, imagined he would then begin the *dreaded* ſubject; — but no ſuch matter; he only talked of the badneſs of the roads; to which, on my making ſome common anſwer, he told me, my reply, for ſo *young* a perſon, was very *judicious*: — he now fell upon *turnpike roads* in general, till we adjourned into the dining parlour. But his ceremony and formality during

ing

ing dinner, beggars all deſcription.—You uſed, my Lucy, to give me the flattering epithet of a *neat* girl:—but, alas! I never can be half exact enough, neat, or delicate, as himſelf.—He was a quarter of an hour cutting up a ſmall chicken:—my father, in his rough way, tho' ſmiling, ſaid, "Come, Emma, ſhall "I ſend you a ſlice of good old "Engliſh roaſt beef?"—but was interrupted by Mr. Branville, with "Fie, fie, Mr. Harvey—I am "going to ſend her this little deli-"cate breaſt of a chicken, which is "*proper* food for her."

I received the plate, after waiting a conſiderable time, with an "I'm "much oblig'd to you, ſir."—This, I found, pleaſed him:—and *hemming*, with a kind glance to me, he ſaid, "he knew *what* ſuch young "ladies *liked*:—Roaſt beef!" ſaid he, "no—that is too coarſe diet for "ſo young and delicate a ſtomach "as I am ſure your *fair* daughter "has." He afterwards helped me to a whipt ſillabub, which, he ſaid, was light, and proper for me.—I ſhall go near, my friend, I doubt, to be *ſtarved*, with this over-*delicate* man.—All this kindneſs at dinner, and

and drinking my health twice, and culling out afterwards ſome of the niceſt fruit for me, I ſuppoſed was to be in *part* of courtſhip. — The afternoon and evening were ſpent deplorably dull :—neither was there any thing in the leaſt particular of notice to me, from Mr. Branville; except his preſenting me with a noſegay in the garden, and deſiring me to throw an handkerchief round my head, leſt I ſhould get cold from the damps of the evening:—"*Delicate* attentions are fit "for *delicate* ladies," ſaid he.——I thank heaven, my Lucy, I am extremely healthy; but *fortunately, if*

Mr. Branville likes the appearance of a languid cheek, I am, you know, a *pale*-faced girl *, with a complexion as white as milk, except I get a little *rouge*, by the help of a walk, or a country dance.—— I began to conclude I by no means pleaſed my old gentleman's fancy: but however in this I was deceived; for as we were the next morning paſſing into the breakfaſt-room,

* Tho' this lovely woman ſpeaks in this degrading way of her own charms, ſhe was uncommonly beautiful; her complexion was particularly fair, and, to uſe Mr. Branville's favourite word, *delicate*; and had more of the *lily* than the roſe in her cheek, unleſs heightened by the bluſh of modeſty.

I ſaw

I ſaw him ſecretly ſqueeze my father's hand, and heard him whiſper —" She's an angel — ſhe is *delicacy* " itſelf."——There's for ye, Lucy! —and in an hour afterwards, I had as full a declaration as I could deſire from this very *delicate* man. I had ſauntered into the garden, and was juſt ſeated in a little arbour, under a wide-ſpreading oak, when I eſpied Mr. Branville, with ſlow ſteps, in a muſing attitude, coming up the walk: — he now ſaw me, and ſoon entered my little retreat. After a few hems, and ſome little heſitation, he began: — " So, ma-" dam, you are enjoying the beau-

" ties

" ties of nature."—I replied, " I " was particularly fond of them."

" I wiſh then," ſaid he, " Miſs " Harvey would come and ſhare " thoſe I have round me in ------- " ſhire, they are beautifully roman- " tic : — ſuch a lovely companion " as yourſelf" (remember, Lucy, I give you his *own* words) " would " render them ſtill more agree- " able!" —— " Sir!" (ſaid I, ſomewhat fluttered)—He then, my dear, really very handſomely, made me an offer of his perſon, his fortune, &c.—And, quite in the *delicate* ſtyle of ancient romance, proceeded to ſay—" only pronounce from thoſe

" coral

" coral lips, that you do not *hate* " me." —— (Pity, my Lucy, that my name was not Cleopatra, or Caſſandra! — *plain* Emma is very *un*couth.) — " *Hate* you, ſir!" (replied I) " no indeed." —— " Enough—enough!" (interrupted he) " I will not diſtreſs a *delicacy* " ſo *extreme:*" (by the way, what *extraordinary delicacy* had I diſcovered?) He then continued, in a ſoft, low voice;—" You give me leave " then to *hope*; and to addreſs " your parents on this head?"—— —— " I am all obedience to " them" (ſaid I.)—He now roſe, and taking my hand (he would not have

have kiſſed it for the world) *bowed* (as it were) on it, and walked away with great form and ceremony. — He told my mother, it ſeems, he was glad to find I was not *inexorable.*

Since this viſit, he has made many more; and, in ſhort, all matters are ſo far concluded, that in a month from this day I am to commence a *bride.* Indeed, I believe Mr. Branville to be a worthy man; and it ſhall be the ſtudy of my life to make him a grateful wife: — to ſay I paſſionately love him, would be a falſehood; however, I have that kind of eſteem for him, which will, I truſt, always excite me to behave

behave to him with kindneſs. I have a wonderful pleaſure, my dear, in the happineſs I give my parents on this occaſion. My mother (dear woman!) is all ſpirits. — After all, my Lucy, what a dreadful *riſque* do thoſe thoughtleſs girls run, who leap walls, and fly over hedge and ditch, from the protection of the moſt tender and conſiderate of parents, to run into the arms of a worthleſs libertine, who probably in one month may leave them to repent their raſhneſs, a prey to laſting anguiſh in this world?

Ah! my friend, in the midſt of the happy proſpects which ſeem to attend.

attend my implicit duty to my parents, a ſigh—a heart-rending ſigh, often eſcapes me, when the loſt, wretched ſiſters crowd into my too officious memory!—To what infamy are they reduced! — Heavens, I ſhudder to think what will be the end of this:—diſeaſe,—the ſtreets, —famine;—O, I muſt fly from the ſad — ſad ſubject! — Would their brother were returned from the Indies! — but, alas! why ſhould I wiſh it? — What a ſcene of miſery will he have to hear! — his ever-lamented parents dead of broken hearts; — his ſiſters (do I live to write it?) common proſtitutes:—the

remainder

remainder of the wretched family reduced to every diſtreſs, but for the kind hand of charity! — This — this is the fatal work of *ſeduction!*

I have had a moſt ſuperb preſent of jewels from Mr. Branville: — my father too has given me a very beautiful pearl necklace and earrings; and is in ſuch good humour with me! he ſays I have reconciled him to *the ſex* — to our wayward, obſtinate ſex, as he calls us.

Write ſoon, I conjure you; and believe me, in every condition of life,

Your moſt faithful friend,

E. H.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

Miſs Waller to Miſs Harvey.

London.

HEROIC Emma! incomparable girl! what a noble pattern have you ſet to our ſex! — to conquer a paſſion for the man you love! — to ſacrifice every tender feeling in his favour!—to give your hand, in all the bloom of youthful beauty of eighteen years, to a man near ſeventy!—and all this from motives of pure duty and affection, to oblige your parents (*one* of whom not the moſt *tender* in the world)—

is

is a triumph, my charming girl, which renders you a very heroine indeed. Depend on it, my excellent Emma, you will be moſt amply *rewarded* for this :—the Father of mercies, — the God of all goodneſs, ſo wills, that we very rarely do not ſee, even in this bad world, but that comforts, and unforeſeen incidents teeming with happineſs, are interwoven with the line of our duty.

Mr. Branville, I doubt not, will make a good, a tender huſband.—You find I was not miſtaken in the character I had heard of his exceſs of *delicacy* : — there is, however, a

falſe, as well as *true* delicacy; I hope *his* is the latter. — You will have every thing, my dear, that a reaſonable woman can wiſh:—fooliſh girls may prate of ſacrificing every thing to *love*, as they call it, and living on bread and water in a cottage;—it requires a ſtrong reſolution to become a *martyr*; and few, when the teſt comes, can ſuſtain the ſhock of poverty, eſpecially when the huſband's *temper* is *ſoured* by that very poverty; which is almoſt always the caſe, and then adieu to all matrimonial felicity.—I am much inclined to think, that when the giant Poverty enters the door

door (according to the old adage) the little urchin Cupid flies out at window.

You ſee this dated, my Emma, from the great metropolis; where the kind friends I am with, are ſo obliging as to ſhew me every mark of politeneſs, in carrying me to the various public amuſements with which this gay place abounds.—Laſt night we were at the play; but, O my friend! how ſhall I tell you that I was ſhocked beyond expreſſion at the following incident?—On happening accidentally to look up from the ſide-box where I ſat, directly oppoſite, in one of the up-

per galleries (where the women of the town uſually ſeat themſelves) I eſpied the once innocent Peggy and Patty, dreſſed in the higheſt ſtyle of faſhionable *diſhabille*; they were in hats, in the utmoſt extremity of the mode, with *ſtreamers* hanging from them to their ſhoulders; and were viſibly *painted*. — I was ready to ſink into the earth to ſee them! —Heavens! (thought I) can it be poſſible that theſe young creatures, who, when I laſt ſaw them, were ſo timidly modeſt, that

"Even their action bluſh'd at itſelf,"

(in the words of my favourite Shakeſpeare)

Shakeſpeare) adorned with an innocent baſhfulneſs, which no words can deſcribe — is it poſſible, I repeat, that theſe very girls ſhould now, dreſſed with the moſt alluring vanity, be ſtaring round them with the utmoſt confidence and effrontery at every fop they ſee! — Ah! my Emma, what did I not feel?—I was *hurt* beyond conception: — it indeed wholly rendered me incapable of enjoying the pleaſure of the entertainment on the ſtage, the brilliancy of the large audience, or the pleaſing effect of the very good band of muſic.—The untimely deaths of the unhappy parents of theſe culpable

pable young women, ruſhed into my mind, and a tear inſenſibly ſtole down my cheek; nor could I help ſecretly exclaiming, "Ah! wretched girls, moſt probably the ſad fate of a tender father, an amiable mother (who periſhed through your infamy) will but too ſoon recoil on your own heads: — poor deluded wretches! how ſoon will this gay dream of diſſipation glide away, and then miſery and black deſpair will at once ſucceed!"—Thus did I ſit, my friend, (abſent to all the gay circle round me) full of the moſt melancholy reflections; and which were

were heightened by their free carriage to two or three gentlemen, who came backwards and forwards into the gallery where they were ſitting; after which they all went out together.

But a truce with this heart-breaking ſubject: — you ſee, my dear, I did not at all, I repeat, exaggerate my account of the extreme *delicacy* of your lover: — had you been a *robuſt*, *roſy-cheeked* girl, the picture of health, you poſſibly might have made no impreſſion on a heart hitherto ſo *inflexible*, to ſpeak in the language of romance, as has been Mr. Branville's; but

that little *pale* face of your's, with a languid air, and a delicate frame, has done your buſineſs, child, at once.

Well!—but, my dear friend, let me know when the happy day is fixed—and which of your ſeats *elect* you viſit firſt.

Heaven bleſs you, and make you happy as you deſerve!—is the moſt ardent wiſh of

Your tenderly affectionate friend,

Lucy Waller.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

Gregory Branville, Eſq; to Sir Jaſper Lumley.

St. Maud's Abbey,
North Wales.

MY WORTHY OLD FRIEND,

YOU are doubtleſs greatly ſurprized at the report, which I ſuppoſe muſt have reached your retirement; namely, that *I*, who have ſo long remained *un*-fettered by the chains of wedlock, ſhould at length be juſt on the brink of *precipitating* myſelf into that *adventurous* ſtate. — You poſſibly ſuppoſe

poſe that the powerful eye of beauty has influenced me in this matter, or that ſome peculiar liking to the ſtate has excited me thereto:—but no ſuch matter.—And I will now, my good Sir Jaſper, open my whole heart to you. — *Reſentment* alone to my ungracious nephew, is the *cauſe* of my entering into a ſtate I have really as hitherto thought a perilous one. You know I have always intended the above-mentioned young man for my heir; that I have brought him up as ſuch from a child, and educated him accordingly; that the world has ever looked upon him as ſuch—which

world

world will, I doubt not, moſt violently exclaim againſt me for diſinheriting the young man; (for by all that is ſacred, he ſhall not have a ſhilling from me) and I may perhaps be called *unjuſt*, after having ſo long *buoyed* the lad up with ſuch great expectations. — 'Tis true, I have heard of no exceſſes, of no vices he has run into — but notwithſtanding this, he has mortally offended me, and I give him up. — The cauſe? you cry — Why, my dear ſir Jaſper, I muſt have my heir (whoever he be) to ſay as *I ſay* — to have *no* will but *mine* — to profeſs *no opinion* but what I

do

do—never to dare to contradict me—never, in party principles eſpecially, to controvert what I advance:—in ſhort, to be entirely devoted to my nod — to my beck:—to go—to come—to laugh—to look ſad—to be wholly, in fact, at my devotion:—but alas! my *undutiful* nephew has failed in every one of theſe important articles — and brought home with him from the univerſity, ſuch a number of new ideas, that I was aſtoniſhed.—He had, I found, a *will* of his own:—would dare to ſay, when I liked claret, port was the wholeſomer wine:—and more than once, when we

we have been talking *over* the American war, would, after differing from me in opinion, have the effrontery to add, "My dear ſir, "give me leave to ſet you *right* in "this particular."—Was this, my friend, to be borne? — Set me right indeed!—intolerable!—When I have ſaid, the king's troops were in cantonments, which formed an extenſive chain from Brunſwick on the Rariton to the river Delaware —the puppy has anſwered,—"I "beg to *diſſent* in opinion — the "river Delaware extends,"—then he has had the inſolence to fetch the American map, of the ſeat of

our

our preſent war, to *confute* me.—I thank God, my *geographical* knowledge is not to be contradicted by a boy.——If I have commended one general in America, he has ſhook his head, and immediately began the praiſes of another.—If I have ſaid, I believed a *peace* would be ſoon on the carpet; he has flatly ſaid, "No, no, ſir, I am credibly "informed from lord W-------, or "ſome of his Oxford friends, that "the war will be carried on with "unremitting vigour."—When I have been commending ſome modern, *delicate*, eaſy poetry,—he has had the audacity to ſay, it was poor, *thin*,

thin, and *flimſy*, in compariſon to the grandeur of the *ancients*.—"Give "me Homer," (ſaid he) "give "me a few verſes of ſweet Virgil; "which are worth a thouſand mo-"dern productions."—Was this, think you, my good ſir Jaſper, (I repeat) to be borne* ?

In ſhort, wearied out with thus continually being *controverted*, I formed the (perhaps *deſperate*) reſolution of marrying ſome young woman, who ſhould, from her appear-

* Mr. Branville is not the only man who expects a mean *ſervility* in thoſe to whom they intend to leave their riches, when they can no longer enjoy them; his worthy nephew, however, had not that ſervility.

ance, promiſe me an heir of my own in wedlock; being determined not to leave my eſtate to ſo vain a coxcomb: — I care not, indeed, what becomes of him. — He has a ſmall—tho' a very ſmall, patrimony of his own, with which he may get into orders, and commence a country curate; where he may ſet *up* his own opinions, and be liſtened to as an oracle:—or he may get ſome little commiſſion in the army:—I have done with him.—Where he is at preſent, I know not; tho' I think ſome of my domeſtics told me (who perfectly idolize him, for he has infinite *art* in winning favour) they heard

heard he was gone over to France. —When I ordered him to remove from my houſe, for that he had highly diſpleaſed me, he had the effrontery to beg to know in what he had *offended*; and feigned to be even *ſhocked* at my meſſage.—He begged to ſee me; but no—I was *inflexible*.

But to the affair of my matrimony:—I have at length fixed on a young lady, who I believe will anſwer my *purpoſe*: ſhe appears good-natured, and is really a delicate girl. —You, my friend, who know my way, my opinions, and methods,

will eaſily give me credit, when I ſay, that I ſhall ſuffer *no woman* to introduce a new ſyſtem of *management* into my family.—This young lady I have made choice of, appears mild and inoffenſive, and I am convinced will *never contradict* me:—I ſhall bring her, immediately after *our nuptials*, to this my ſeat in Wales;—and if ſhe does not bring me a ſon and heir within the twelvemonth, I ſhall be grievouſly diſappointed.

Adieu. You will perhaps call me an old fool for marrying;—but I truſt, when you conſider my *reaſons*

ſons for ſo doing, you will applaud the *proper reſentment* (to an ungrateful nephew) of

Your very faithful friend, &c.

Gregory Branville.

LETTER XXI.

Mrs. Branville to Miſs Waller.

St. Maud's Abbey,
North Wales.

MY DEAR LUCY,

MY laſt letter *, which contained a large piece of bride-cake, and a ſilver wedding-favour, I hope you received ſafe. I now take up

* This letter appears not.

my pen to tell you, we arrived at this venerable manſion a fortnight ſince: I am highly pleaſed with its romantic ſituation, its *ivied* walls, and the ſolemn air of melancholy which reigns throughout. Happily I have a taſte for retirement; and here I ſhall enjoy my enthuſiaſtic paſſion for the beauties of nature:—we are ſurrounded with mountains, natural caſcades, and lofty woods. My good huſband, (which epithet I doubt not I ſhall always be enabled to give him,) behaves with great kindneſs; — and has been ſo obliging as to permit me to bring from Cumberland the two poor little children,

Molly

Molly and Billy Summers. But the worthy man (as part of his extreme *delicacy* of character) has annexed juſt the ſame condition to their remaining with me, as my poor father did; namely, that I muſt for ever *renounce*, and on no account whatever relieve, the *proſtitute ſiſters*. Mr. Branville is quite outrageous about them, having heard the whole ſad ſtory;—and, in ſhort, I renewed to him my promiſe:—indeed, how could I, my dear, have avoided ſo doing?—but yet, at the time, my heart aſſented not with my lips.

I have been viſited by ſome agreeable families, on coming here:—

particularly, I find I ſhall *love* a Mrs. Belmont, wife of a gentleman of good fortune, within a little walk of the abbey; we are already upon a free footing.—Both ſhe and ſome others lament greatly, it ſeems, (tho' I know not why) the fate of a nephew of Mr. Branville's; who, tho' bred up quite in the ſtyle of high life, as believing he was to be his uncle's whole and ſole heir, has been ſome time diſcarded, and is now it ſeems wandering God knows where, in very reduced circumſtances:—the Belmonts ſpeak of him in very high terms, as one of the fineſt young men in the king-

dom,

dom, both in manners and underſtanding. — Poor young man! I pity him, tho' I really know not the merits of the cauſe on either ſide: — and what makes his caſe more affecting is, he was the only child of a ſiſter of Mr. Branville; who, with her laſt breath, committed him to the care of her brother.—This, my dear, I have only gathered by broken hints from Mr. and Mrs. Belmont; for you may be certain they would not ſay the leaſt ſyllable to me relative to *blaming* the conduct of my huſband in this matter, or in any other.

We are to viſit London ſome time hence. With what happineſs ſhall I meet my deareſt friend!—But pray, Lucy, give me leave to aſk, have you made no conqueſts in all the gay circle of agreeable people you are engaged in? do be honeſt, and confeſs the truth.—

When I am in town, I ſhall cultivate the friendſhip of that excellent woman Mrs. Bennet. Ah my dear! if I ſhould ever ſee thoſe miſerable girls, Peggy and Patty, (dreſt and behaving in the manner you mention) in a public place, I think I ſhould faint on the ſpot.—Good Heavens!—how depraved—how

loſt

loſt are thoſe deluded young creatures! — But I muſt fly from the cutting ſubject.

Write ſoon, my beloved friend; and *be ſure* do not forget to mention how many half-ſcore of *conqueſts* you have made in the great town.

Adieu!

I am ever your's
moſt faithfully,
Emma Branville.

LETTER XXII.

Miſs Waller to Mrs. Branville,
(in anſwer to the preceding letter.)

London.

YES — yes — my dear friend, I have made a *conqueſt* with a witneſs —

witneſs — at leaſt I *hope* I *have*; for moſt certain it is, that little hard bit of *adamant*, my *heart*, is now *conquered* for ever.—Love, indeed, for my having ſo long defied his all-powerful ſway, has now taken ample revenge. Alas! my dear, I am already moſt deeply—what ſhall I call it? — never was any man ſo handſome, ſo agreeable, ſo ſenſible —" But who" (you cry) " is this " Narciſſus, this demi-god?" — I defy you to gueſs in ten thouſand years.—" Do not, Lucy," (you cry) " tantalize me in this manner, " but prythee come to the matter " at once."—Well then, my dear,

to

to begin my *adventure* — for an *adventure* it certainly was, as worthy of that name as ever was recorded in any novel or memoirs extant.

About a week ſince I went with a ſmall but agreeable party to the opera; which party conſiſted of only two ladies, myſelf, and the huſband of one of them.—As the houſe had that night been much crowded, in getting out of it we met with ſome difficulties; for as we had only one gentleman with us, he had certainly enough to do, to take care of *three* women. — However, with no ſmall danger of being ſqueezed to death, we were got into the paſſages of the houſe, and trying to get to our

chairs,

chairs, which waited for us, when on a ſudden a well-dreſt man, but evidently of the moſt libertine ſtamp, ſeized me rudely round the waiſt, and inſtantly ſeparated me from my company. — I ſhrieked, thinking no leſs than that he was going to bear me off. As he ſtill continued moſt rudely graſping me, I again ſhrieked; when, ruſhing from the crowd, came to my aſſiſtance, O my Emma, ſuch a man! — "Unhand the lady, ſir," (ſaid he) "this inſtant, or by Heaven I "ſwear, the next ſhall be your "laſt!" — putting his hand to his ſword. — The villain who had hold

of

of me, after ſwearing moſt bitterly, now relinquiſhed his graſp.—I was breathleſs, — ready to faint, — but my *deliverer* moſt kindly ſupported me in his arms; for I trembled to ſo great a degree, I could hardly ſtand.—" I beg, madam," (ſaid he, with the utmoſt reſpect) " you will " give me leave to eſcort you—Did " the raſcal hurt you, madam?—a " rude fellow! — Heavens! what " can I do to aſſiſt you!" (ſeeing my extreme diſorder.)—I burſt into tears, which relieved me,—he ſeemed greatly affected.—" Good God!" ſaid he, (looking at me with equal earneſtneſs and reſpectful tenderneſs)

neſs) " where ſhall I get you ſome " drops—ſome water? "—He held my hand all this time, aſſuring me, whilſt under his protection no one ſhould alarm me. — I told him, I thought I was a little recovered, and that I begged to be put into a chair: — he conducted me with the greateſt care through the remaining crowd, and calling a chair, put me into it. — " You tremble ſtill, ma- " dam," ſaid he—and O my Emma! what an air of humanity and tender compaſſion was ſpread over his fine countenance! — " You tremble," (continued he)—" run this inſtant" (to a chairman) " and procure a " glaſs

" glaſs of water and ſome hartſ-
" horn drops, for this poor lady.
" — I will ſtay and protect you,
" madam," ſaid he, " therefore be
" under no apprehenſions, I beſeech
" you:—no one ſhall hurt you."

" Surely Heaven," (ſaid I) " ſent
" you, ſir, to my aid." — By this time the water and drops arrived; which this moſt amiable man gave me to drink, with the tenderneſs of a brother (or rather, you will ſay, with that of a *lover*;) and I then found myſelf much better: he ſtill held my hand — I thought at the time, as if unwilling to *part* with it. — " Will you give me leave, ma-

dam," (ſaid he, with eyes that were not *ſafely* to be looked on,) " to at-
" tend you home?—or at leaſt, to
" wait on you to-morrow to en-
" quire how you do, after this acci-
" dent."—" I ſhall certainly," (re-
plied I) " be glad to thank you,
" ſir, and ſo will my *friends*, for
" the very great favour of your aſ-
" ſiſtance." — My voice faltered when I pronounced the laſt ſen-tence:—he bowed reſpectfully low, and on my giving orders to the chair-men where to go, took his leave.

Never had I ſeen a man ſo in-finitely amiable: — my thoughts were indeed full of him, in my way

way home, which was upwards of a mile :—but, O heavens! how was I ſtruck with the extreme politeneſs of his behaviour, or rather *kindneſs*, when on looking through the glaſſes, as I often did, I ſaw him carefully attending me the whole way, and walking cloſe by the ſide of the chair.—At length I arrived at my friends' houſe; the kind gentleman knocked at the door, and again aſked me how I did after my fright.—I teſtified my gratitude for his extreme politeneſs :—"I beg, "madam," (ſaid he) "you will not "even mention ſo trifling a mat-"ter as a favour."—Saying which,

he bowed; and, ſeeing the foot-man ſafely conduct me into the houſe, inſtantly departed.—Gallant! was not this?—My friends had been terrified to death, upon my account; and on miſſing my hold of them in the opera-paſſage, had turned back, but unfortunately could not find me in the crowd.—You will judge their pleaſure at my return ſo ſafe, and *ſo* genteelly guarded.—When we were all a little compoſed, they rallied me on my *deliverer*, *prognoſticating* a future *lover*.—I retired to bed, my Emma; but ſleep, for the firſt time in my life, had quite forſaken me.—I would fain here at-

tribute my *wakefulneſs* throughout the night, to my preceding fright; but no—I will honeſtly confeſs, the agreeable ſtranger, the enchanting man who had *reſcued* me, from perhaps everlaſting ruin, (for the impudent fellow who aſſaulted me, would certainly have carried me off)—I ſay, my amiable deliverer, kept me waking all night:—methought I heard his ſoothing voice, and ſtill ſaw his fine figure, his expreſſive eyes, &c.—I ſighed—"This,—this," (exclaimed I ſoftly) "would be *the man* if every cir-
"cumſtance were ſuitable;—but,
"my ſtars! how know I but that

" he may be already *married?*—moſt " likely he is:—*ſuch* a form,—and " *ſuch* winning manners—*muſt* have " attracted our ſex.—Ah wretched " Lucy!—moſt probably he may be " the huſband of another woman."

How *induſtrious* are we (my dear) to torment ourſelves! No ſooner had the above *fear* taken poſſeſſion of me, than I at once found the agreeable man had made no ſmall *impreſſion* on my heart.—" Nay," (thought I) " if he be *not* " married, does it at all follow, " that his *liking me* ſhould be the " conſequence of this night's ad- " venture?"—I aroſe after a ſleepleſs

leſs night; and, as I firmly believed my gallant deliverer would wait on me, (as he ſaid) I dreſt myſelf (I will be ſo honeſt to confeſs) with more care than uſual; my diſhabille was a morning undreſs — a ſilver-ſprigged muſlin night-gown, with a white luteſtring flounced petticoat, and every other part of my dreſs equally elegant. — Preciſely at the hour of twelve at noon, a rap at the door gave me to underſtand, as well as a violent *flutter* at my heart, that my gentleman was arrived.— He entered with the moſt graceful air, and came up to me (*tenderly* I thought) enquiring after my

health :—he was dreſt, I obſerved, in deep mourning; a circumſtance which the night before, being wrapt in a great coat, I did not obſerve.

We were now all ſeated: (I ſay *all*, for my friends were in the room)—I ſtole a glance, unperceived, at my amiable gueſt.—Imagine the fineſt figure, with a countenance expreſſive of great ſentiment and benevolence;—eyes (what ſhould a *man* do with ſuch eyes?) black, piercing, and yet languiſhingly tender:—but throughout his whole appearance there was an air inexpreſſibly melancholy, as if labouring under ſome recent or deep affliction:

affliction :—(poſſibly, thought I, he is *in love*, and not beloved *again*, which occaſions that penſive manner, which however was captivating.)

And now, my dear, are you not upon the very top of the *tenterhooks* of female curioſity, to know *who* and *what* this man is? You will be amazed when I tell you ;—but to lead to it :—We began talking of the laſt night's adventure ; "I have not the honour *yet*" (ſaid I) "of knowing the name of "my gallant deliverer :" — but gueſs my aſtoniſhment, my dear friend, when he inſtantly replied,

"My name, madam, is *Summers*; I "arrived only a month ſince from "the Eaſt Indies."——"Good hea- "vens!" (ſaid I) "Mr. Summers! "from the Eaſt Indies!"

"Why," (ſaid he) "madam," (with quickneſs) "have you ever "heard of that name before?—I "ſurely came to England in an ill- "fated hour, for I have not only "loſt, I find, very lately, two of "the moſt worthy parents that "ever exiſted, but alſo," (here he ſighed moſt deeply) "am in the ut- "moſt diſtreſs of mind on *another* "*account* in my family."—He pauſed,—he looked down,—whilſt I ſaw

I ſaw a tear gliſten in his expreſſive eyes.——" I did, indeed ſir," (replied I, much moved) " know *well* " your excellent parents; — and I " can never ceaſe to regret their " loſs."—— " Then you muſt alſo " know, madam,"——he ſtopped; — he walked to the window, — he put his handkerchief to his eyes: we were both ſilent for ſome moments.

O Emma! what a diſcovery was this! — To change the mournful ſubject, I exclaimed, " Good hea- " vens! and am I ſo much in- " debted to a gentleman, with " whom, by report, I was ſo well " acquainted?

" acquainted? You muſt remem-
" ber Mr. Harvey, ſir, of Aſhdale
" in Cumberland."——" Moſt in-
" timately, madam." —— " His
" daughter," (meaning your lady-
ſhip) returned I, " is my moſt dear
" and boſom friend." ——" How
" does ſhe?" — (ſaid he) " I re-
" member her well — very well:
" —a ſweet little girl; — we were
" play-fellows." — He ſighed (his
abominable ſiſters that moment oc-
curred, I doubt not.) — I then, my
dear, gave him a particular account
of your late happy wedding; — of
my long intimacy with you;—and
laſtly, that I was of Carliſle myſelf,
and

and that my name was Waller — a name he might recollect.

" Recollect, madam! yes indeed; " —my ever honoured father ſpoke " of your's in the higheſt terms."

He told me he was now at his couſin Bennet's, to whom he immediately on his arrival in England repaired; — " with an intention, (ſaid the worthy young man) " of " ſetting off early the next morn- " ing, poſt haſte, on the wings of " filial duty and affection, to the " beſt of parents: — but, gracious " God! what was my ſhock, when " Mr. Bennet revealed to me the " *horrid* ſtory of the *cauſe* that " bereaved

" bereaved me, I underſtand, of
" both ;—*both* within the ſpace of
" a week. — Alas ! with what joy,
" on my landing in England, after
" a long and dangerous voyage,
" did I pleaſe myſelf with the fond
" hope, that by the bounty of Pro-
" vidence, having met with won-
" derful ſucceſs in the Indies, I
" had it now in my power, moſt
" amply, to make my dear parents'
" life not only eaſy, but affluent !
" —there was ſomething peculiarly
" diſtreſſing in hearing they were
" no more." —— Here his voice
ſunk, — and he melted into tears :
—— " O, Miſs Waller !" (conti-
nued

nued he, in broken accents) " but " I will not dwell on *my own* afflic- " tions !"——" They are" (ſaid I) " the *afflictions* of all who know " them."—My heart was ſoftened; —I wept—I could not help it:— the excellent father at Aſhdale ruſhed into my head, who ſo *long* and ſo *ardently* had *wiſhed* once more to ſee this *darling* ſon before he went down to his grave in peace.—Ah! little could he imagine his once dear Peggy and Patty could ſo *ſoon* bring his grey hairs with ſorrow to that grave.

Our converſation now became more general. — You will imagine we

we could not want diſcourſe, after ſuch a diſcovery.—This moſt amiable man ſat with us till dinner-time; — and at going, methought, with particular earneſtneſs, deſired I would give him leave to wait on me again. — "Nothing" (ſaid I, bluſhing *extremely*, for which I was very angry with myſelf) "can give "me greater pleaſure than your "viſits." — The obliging family with whom I am, entreated him to come often.—He has indeed viſited us very frequently; and each time I ſee him, if poſſible, I diſcover ſtill ſome new and amiable quality.

My friends here, for ſome days paſt,

paſt, have told me he is moſt deeply ſmitten with your humble ſervant; —and, to ſay truth, I am quite a peeviſh, love-ſick girl:—within theſe laſt five days I have done nothing but ſcold poor Kitty my maid:—am grown abſolutely thin, and look pale; with a face as long as your arm.—To confeſs the truth (O what a mean paſſion, after all, is this love!) I have been a little *jealous*, an pleaſe ye, of Mrs. Bennet's pretty daughters:—you will allow, it was not at all improbable but that Mr. Summers might love one of his very amiable couſins; and that Mr. Bennet would embrace the match:

match: — this thought has given me much diſquietude: — the adepts in love ſay there can be no *love* without *jealouſy*.—But, however, I have the inexpreſſible happineſs of informing you, my dear, that yeſterday evening, Mr. Summers finding me alone, a kind of tender converſation began (I know not how) on his ſide; and after much modeſt diffidence he declared himſelf my lover, in the ſtrongeſt terms imaginable. — What I ſaid, or how I looked, I know not: — I only remember that I gave him leave to *hope*.

I leave you to gueſs, my friend, the

the ſtate of my mind at preſent.—My relations can but rejoice at this alliance:—his fortune is (my dear) upwards, I find, of thirty thouſand pounds; all which he has made in the Eaſt Indies, by his proper conduct and induſtry.—We have heard an amazing good character of this amiable man, from a gentleman who well knew him there.—O that it had pleaſed Heaven to have ſpared his worthy father's life, to have enjoyed ſome of this good fortune!—But theſe *abominable* girls!—I *muſt* tell you, my Emma, that I ſometimes think Mr. Summers, when he ſmiles, has juſt ſuch a *dimple* in his

cheek as our poor Patty had;—and his fine dark eyes are as *expreſſive* as Peggy's were!—Where, or what may now be their ſituation?—perhaps again in ſome brothel;—for I ſhould ſuppoſe their very libertine keepers may by this time be weary of them.

You will, I am convinced, be agreeably ſurprized in *my deliverer*, as I call him, being the very agreeable Mr. *Summers*, whom we have been all ſo long wiſhing to return.—Ah! would he *had* returned a twelvemonth ago; the girls,—the parents,—had then, perhaps, been ſaved.

Your felicity gives me extreme pleaſure;

pleaſure; but you, my ſweet friend, have a fund of contentment and good-humour, which renders you eaſy under every circumſtance.—I *think*, my dear Emma, I ſhall marry this man!—*think*, do I ſay?—what affectation!—let me honeſtly declare that I *ſhall certainly* be his wife in *due* time.

Believe me, moſt unalterably, in all ſituations,

Your own

Lucy.

MANY letters between the amiable friends, Mrs. Branville and Miſs Waller, paſſed in the ſpace of the enſuing twelvemonth; but they are

not inſerted; as containing nothing eſſentially neceſſary to the thread of our hiſtory.—Some incidents however happened in that ſpace, with which we ſhall acquaint the reader; —namely, That Miſs Waller, in a few months after the preceding letter, gave her hand to Mr. Summers, and were now very genteelly ſettled in London; his good fortune, with her's, enabling them ſo to do.—During this period, the unfortunate ſiſters, Peggy and Patty, were diſcarded by lord Racket and ſir Harry Ranger:—the former being wholly engaged in ſeducing the young and beautiful daughter of a tenant of his

in

in the country; he therefore got rid of Peggy, and was mean enough to take a few jewels he had preſented to her, her watch, &c. before ſhe departed; pretending to pick a quarrel with her;—and though his cruel behaviour, in the vile arts uſed to ſeduce theſe poor innocent girls, deſerved exemplary puniſhment, and tho' ſome proviſion might have been expected (any donation, indeed, however great, muſt have been very far inadequate to recompenſe their injuries) yet the wretch turned the poor girl adrift, without ſo much as a ſingle guinea in her pocket. She immediately flew to her ſiſter, whom ſir

Harry Ranger had ſold to a *Jew* a few days before.—Theſe miſerable girls now experienced various keepers, and various miſeries :—they were in the poſſeſſion, at times, of a ſea-captain, an old uſurer, a colonel, a merchant, &c. &c.—ſometimes loaded with preſents ; ſometimes ſitting in a garret without a ſhilling.—They had never heard of the death of their parents ; — and ſeldom, now, a thought of their loſt ſtate of innocence, or even of Cumberland, occurred ; except that one day, as they happened to be together, an old news-paper, (the date of which was ſix months before) in

which ſome tea was accidentally wrapt, was taken up by Peggy, who at the firſt glance ſpied the following paragraph: — "On Mon- " day laſt was married, at Aſhdale " church, in Cumberland, Miſs " Emma Harvey, of Moſs-Hill, to " Gregory Branville, Eſq; of up- " wards of three thouſand a year; " after the ceremony, the new-mar- " ried couple ſat out for his ſeat in " -----ſhire."—"Heavens!" (ſaid Peggy, exclaiming) — "ſee — ſee, " Patty,—*our* once *dear* Emma is " happily *married*,"—Here a tear ſtole down her cheek; not at the good fortune of her former friend,

but at the reflection on their miſerable way of life; which muſt neceſſarily preclude them from all future ſociety with her.

But leaving theſe wretched girls for the preſent, to the miſerable ſtate which muſt ever attend *proſtitution*, we will ſee what the amiable Mrs. Branville is now doing.—This lady, to the extreme joy of her huſband, had been declared pregnant ſome time:—Mr. Branville behaved even ridiculouſly on this occaſion;—as he doubted not now of having a ſon and heir to his eſtate, he had cauſed a new ſet of bells to be put up in the church, near his houſe;—

he

he had pitched upon a ſpot where an immenſe bonfire (on the night the young heir ſhould be born) ſhould blaze to a height to be ſeen for miles, to ſignify the joyful event; he had ordered an amazing ſtock of lamps to be provided, that a general illumination might be, not only in every ancient window of the abbey, but alſo on every pinnacle, turret, and pediment, from the top of it to the bottom.

But alas—alas! how ſoon are the hopes of poor mortals fruſtrated!—As Mr. Branville was walking on his terrace—inly rejoicing, that his nephew *now*, by the birth of this

boy,

boy, (for *a boy* he would have it to be) would even be drove to deſpair by diſappointment, he was at once interrupted in his *benevolent* reflections, by a ſervant running to inform him, Mrs. Branville, in conſequence of a fright ſhe had juſt had, was ſuddenly ſeized with the pangs of childbirth (ſome weeks before the exact time)—and, dire to ſay, every ſymptom attended her, of the moſt imminent danger:—at length, after laying near a week in agonies, and ſuffering extremely, ſhe was, by the ſurgeons who attended her, delivered of a *dead* girl. — This ſad news was related immediately to

Mr. Branville, who appeared moſt wonderfully concerned;—but whether his affliction proceeded from his being diſappointed of his long-expected heir, in a *living boy*, or from grief at the ſufferings of his poor wife, we will not pretend to ſay; however, we will be ſo charitable as to *hope* the latter.

The abbey now was deplorably melancholy: poor Mrs. Branville was ſeveral weeks before ſhe gained ſtrength ſufficient to leave her room; however, by degrees, ſhe ſlowly recovered, owing to her youth, and a good conſtitution. But as to Mr. Branville, he had actually *fretted* himſelf,

himſelf, at his late diſappointment, into a very ſevere fit of the gout; and was now grown ſo intolerably *peeviſh*, there was no enduring his humours: but the patience and ſweet temper of the amiable Mrs. Branville enabled her, with unremitting aſſiduity and tenderneſs, to ſuſtain his froward pettiſhneſs; which even increaſed, as he now began to give up all thoughts of an heir — the only reaſon for his entering into wedlock.

Mrs. Branville was ſurely a *pattern* of conjugal tenderneſs; for though her peeviſh huſband's behaviour to her, indicated that his affection

fection for her was *declining*, yet ſhe never uttered complaint: —ſhe would herſelf adminiſter all his medicines; and ordered a ſmall pallet-bed to be prepared for her, in his ſick chamber, that ſhe might herſelf perform the office of nurſe: —ſhe had too much penetration not to ſee a viſible alteration in his behaviour to her, but ſhe had too much good ſenſe to take the leaſt notice of it.—"He is my huſband," (ſhe would ſay to herſelf) "it is my "duty to bear his little pettiſh "humours, his unkind anſwers, "&c. I truſt, my conſcious ſatis-"faction, in fully *endeavouring* to

"make

" make him happy, will ſupport " me under every trial."

In this manner did ſhe continually reaſon; — uncommon prudence in a young creature of nineteen years of age, one of the moſt beautiful of women, and united to an old, peeviſh humouriſt of ſeventy!

Mr. Branville's annual fit of the gout now ſubſided; but his temper was entirely ſcured from his late diſappointment.

The families round the abbey (who all pitied and loved his charming wife) now began again to viſit there as uſual:—And now we ſhall

again

again preſent the reader with a letter from Mrs. Branville to her fair friend in town.

LETTER XXIII.

Mrs. Branville to Mrs. Summers.

St. Maud's Abbey, North Wales,
Tueſday.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

YOUR letters have been my great comfort; for my poor Mr. Branville has had a very ſevere fit of the gout; which, from the confinement that muſt neceſſarily attend

attend a ſick room, (for I had great ſatisfaction in being his ſole nurſe) has a good deal lowered my ſpirits; —but I thank Heaven he is now perfectly recovered, and I alſo am grown ſo ſtout as to be able to walk a mile every day.—I have inſtituted a little charity ſchool at the end of our park, which I viſit daily, and which gives me wonderful pleaſure!

What infinite wiſdom, my friend, has the great Creator ſhewn in his appointments of all ſublunary events! and how loaden with obligations are we poor mortals, in that eternal *change* which is ever below

low taking place! — There is no continuance, my Lucy, of either joy or ſorrow in this earthly ſtate: — *grief* gives way to *patience* — *deſpair*, to *hope*—every thing, in ſhort, ſeems modified in ſuch ſucceſſion, that a ſweet harmony reſults from all terreſtrial things. Sentiment

The account you give me, my dear, of your happineſs, is delightful: — I never can enough eſteem and love your moſt amiable huſband.

Our agreeable neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Belmont, are now in the country; we are going to ſpend this day with them: — I am quite

upon a free footing with that agreeable woman. I hope there will not be a large party;—but an account of my day I will give you on my return in the evening, as I cannot now conclude, Mr. Branville having ſent up to tell me the carriage waits; —and we *wives*, Lucy, you know, *muſt* be *obedient*.——Adieu then till I return.

Mrs. Branville in Continuation.

Tueſday Night.

O, my dear, I have *ſuch* an incident to relate! wonderful indeed!

——I

——I have been ſo ſurprized!—ſo fluttered!—You never *can* gueſs the occaſion of this ſurprize.——Good Heavens! I even think I have been the whole day in a dream.

Now is that little *woman's* heart of your's beating with impatience. —Well! I will give you a full and true account of this very *un*looked-for incident: — Mr. Branville and I went this day to dine, according to our appointment, at Mr. Belmont's.—We found nobody there, on our entering the drawing-room, neither did we enquire if any more company were to be there: — before dinner my charming friend,

Mrs. Belmont, ſat down to the harpſicord, and deſired me to accompany her with my voice (to which ſhe is *too* partial):—we were in the middle of our ſong, and I was ſtanding cloſe to the harpſicord in the attitude of ſinging, when the door was flung open, and a ſervant announced the names of Sir Thomas Douglas and * Mr. Aſhley.—"Good God!" (exclaimed Mr. Branville)—"my nephew!"—That

* The reader may perhaps wonder that Mr. Aſhley, the nephew, ſhould viſit Mr. Belmont when his uncle was there; but in fact he knew it not till he was entered the houſe, and then thought if he retired it would have an odd appearance.

inſtant

inſtant entered an old baronet; — but O my Lucy! an univerſal tremor ſeized me, when I ſaw at once, in the perſon of this nephew,—this Mr. Aſhley,—my *once* beloved, and never to be forgotten *Edward*, the amiable ſtranger that appeared in Cumberland. — O, my friend, I thought I ſhould have dropt into the earth! — I trembled; — I felt my face glow like fire. — Ah! my dear, *vain*, I find, were my hopes that I had conquered my affection for this lovely youth: — I aſſure you I was near fainting, ſo great was my perturbation.—He too appeared moſt amazingly fluttered;

—he even ſtarted at ſeeing me as the wife of Mr. Branville; Mrs. Belmont having ſaid, after the firſt uſual compliments at their coming into the room, "Well! now let "us finiſh our ſong, Mrs. *Bran-* "*ville*, Sir Thomas is fond of mu- "ſic:"—but alas! my dear, I was ſo violently—ſo ſuddenly agitated, that I found it almoſt impoſſible to proceed:—I was three notes below the key, and three bars out of time.—"What ails you?" (cried my lively Mrs. Belmont) "what "on a ſudden is come to you?—Mr. Aſhley, or rather my too amiable Edward—(*mine* do I call him?

him? ah! no)—bowed low to me; —his fine face in a glow.—He certainly, my dear, muſt remember me in the perſon of Emma Harvey; and I thought I heard him ſecretly exclaim, "Good God!" —— My huſband gave him indeed a moſt angry contemptuous look, whilſt the polite Mr. Belmont addreſſed him with great kindneſs, and welcomed him to England; where I underſtood he had been only a week arrived.

Dinner was now announced, and we all adjourned to the dining parlour.—You will pity me, my Lucy, I am convinced, at this period, as I

found it no ſmall difficulty to *guard my looks*.—Mr. Branville appeared, I muſt ſay, in an exceeding ill humour; I was terrified to death leſt he had ſeen my unuſual tremor on the firſt appearance of his nephew; who all dinner-time, and afterwards, appeared buried in thought —melancholy—penſive to the laſt degree. — Both Mr. and Mrs. Belmont moſt politely took great notice of the *poor young man*. — Mrs. Belmont and I retired after dinner into the drawing-room: — "What "a fine young fellow is Mr. Aſh-"ley!" (ſaid ſhe) "I hope in "God your huſband will do ſome-"thing

" thing for him;—the poor youth
" has never offended; nay, knows
" not to this moment what he
" can have done to have incurred
" his diſpleaſure:—do, my dear
" Mrs. Branville, intercede for this
" amiable man:—after having
" been bred as he has been, and
" now to be caſt off in this man-
" ner!—We did not know of their
" coming to-day.—Sir Thomas
" Douglas is a worthy man, and
" pities him greatly; and don't *you*
" pity him, my dear?" ſaid Mrs. Belmont:—" Indeed I do" (ſaid I, involuntarily ſighing.—The gentlemen afterwards came to us: Mr. Aſhley

Aſhley was now importuned to ſit down to the harpſicord. Alas! (my dear) of how many elegant accompliſhments is this agreeable man a maſter!—perfections which, owing to the ſlight acquaintance I had with him in Cumberland, I did not know.

After ſome modeſt diffidence, he ſat down to the inſtrument, and performed an extempore concerto, in the moſt maſterly manner:—never did I hear ſuch taſte, ſuch execution!—Mrs. Belmont deſired him to ſing,—he begged to be excuſed, ſaying, he was not *in ſpirits*. At length he obliged the company with

with a moſt ſweet Italian ſong of Sacchini's: —"Se non felice,"—his manner is ſo delicately tender, it is even *dangerous* to hear him.

The very inſtant we had ſwallowed down our tea, and I thought rather abruptly, Mr. Branville ordered our carriage;—Mr. Aſhley, when I left the room, gave me a *look* at parting, which convinced me he had not forgot *Emma Harvey*.

The moment we were ſeated in the carriage, and driving down the avenue, Mr. Branville accoſted me in a tone of voice rather ſevere;—"One would imagine, from your "*agitation* when that coxcomb, "my

" my nephew, came into the room
" to-day, you had been a former ac-
" quaintance of his;—or is it your
" diſpoſition to be thus in *tremors*
" at the ſight of a young fellow?—
" but tell me truly, Emma, do you
" know this young man?"—(You,
my Lucy, know I ſcorn an evaſion
or untruth)—" I *have* ſeen him, ſir,
" as a viſiter at a gentleman's houſe
" in Cumberland; but I give you
" my honour, I never heard his
" name in my life, till this day."—
" *Indeed!*"—ſaid he very gravely,
—and not another word did he ſay,
till we got home; when, on en-
tering the parlour, he ordered a
baſon

baſon of *water-gruel*, and went to bed :—I came up to my cloſet, and ſcribbled thus far to my Lucy.

My mind at preſent is much agitated. — Mr. Branville's unuſual *coldneſs* to me this evening, fills me with a thouſand fears, leſt he ſhould entertain the "*green-eyed monſter*" in his boſom.—But I will not anticipate evils ;—he could mean *nothing !*—But I was conſcious I had before ſeen Mr. Aſhley ; though Heaven knows how *innocently*. — Nay, my dear, I know not to this moment, that he ever entertained a ſingle ſentiment in my favour.

After all, Lucy, don't you think

Mr. Branville ought to do *ſomething* for the *poor young* man?—But adieu. Write ſoon; and believe me

Moſt unalterably your's,

Emma Branville.

Wedneſday Morning.

P. S. I unſeal my letter to ſay, that this morning my huſband has juſt informed me, he has received letters, which require his preſence at his ſeat at Aſhgrove, near London; and if I *chuſe* to accompany him, I am to be ready to ſet out the latter end of this week. You may be convinced I embraced his pro-

poſal with great pleaſure; — for, beſides the extreme joy I ſhall have in ſeeing and being ſo near you, my moſt beloved friend, I wiſh extremely to convince Mr. Branville (as you will perceive I fear a *tendency* in his mind to jealouſy) that I have no wiſh at *this particular* time to remain in the country, when he is in town: — I am glad, in ſhort, to have an opportunity of being juſt now *abſent* from the abbey. — Am I not right?

LET-

LETTER XXIV.

Mr. Edward Aſhley, to Henry Sackville, Eſq.

Douglas Houſe.

O My friend, I have ſeen her! —at length I have again beheld the lovely angel, for whom I have been ſo long wretched.—But alas! how have I ſeen her?—*diſtraction* is in the thought:——ſhe is —ſhe is—the wife of my uncle!—Heavens! do I live to write it! —What—Emma! the enchanting Emma Harvey, his *wedded wife!*—

I had

I had heard in France, a twelve-month ſince, he had married a beautiful young lady; but little—little, my friend, could I ſuppoſe the moſt lovely girl on earth could ſacrifice herſelf in this manner.—Imagine my amazement, my Henry, when I give you the following particulars of how and where I met this angel.—A few days ſince, I went with Sir Thomas Douglas (at whoſe ſeat I now am) to dine at Mr. Belmont's, who always ſhewed me particular civility:—we alighted, and did not aſk if there were company, till we were walking with Mr. Belmont's footman thro' the hall;—he

ſaid, " only Mr. Branville and his " lady dine here." — For me (my friend) to have turned back, as if I would avoid my uncle (when, Heaven knows, I am conſcious I never offended him) would have been a ſtrange proceeding; we therefore went on to the drawing-room; the door of which being flung open by the ſervant, O Heavens! what was my amazement, my perturbation, when the firſt object which preſented, was the loveliеſt of women, the enchanting Emma, ſtanding by the harpſicord in the attitude of ſinging! — I was ready to ſink into the earth, ſo great was my agitation.

agitation.—But oh, my Sackville! how ſhall I give you an adequate idea of the equal confuſion of the ſweet girl, on my unexpected appearance? — A death-like paleneſs firſt took place, which was immediately ſucceeded by the deep glow of a crimſon bluſh, which ruſhed at once in her lovely cheeks:—a ſong ſhe held in her hand, dropt to the ground, and her whole delicate frame diſcovered unuſual tremors.—(I pray Heaven my uncle did not diſcover her diſorder!)—At that moment, a kind of languid joy ruſhed through my heart, as imagining ſhe was ſtill *my* Emma Harvey;—(not

dreaming ſhe *could* be *Mrs. Branville*, who I imagined might be poſſibly in ſome other room in the houſe.) But ah! my friend, I was ſoon — too ſoon fatally convinced (by Mrs. Belmont's addreſſing her by the name of Branville) of the wretched ſacrifice ſhe has made of herſelf.

The whole day ſhe appeared abſent, loſt in thought;—*tender* methought; and ſometimes her expreſſive eyes (there's *magic* in them) were timidly directed to me.—She ſaid but little the whole day; — I even leſs; ſo ſtruck—ſo hurt—ſo amazed was I, at what I ſaw. — The wife of my uncle! — O my friend, madneſs, diſ-

diſtraction is in the thought! — Ah Emma! why in ſuch haſte to throw yourſelf for ever into the arms of a man whom you cannot love?—'Tis true, my eyes—a few nameleſs attentions *only*—were all the tokens I dared, in my uncertain circumſtances, to declare of the beſt, the trueſt, the moſt tender paſſion, which ever touched the heart of man.—'Sdeath! raſh girl, what have you done? — you might have waited, ſurely, a few ſhort months, to have ſeen the reſult of an affection, which you *muſt* have obſerved:—no duty could *force* you to the altar:—no parents' commands could juſtify ſo great a ſa-

crifice!—no—no—you were led, I doubt not, a willing victim.—Did my eyes (thoſe faithful interpreters of the heart) never diſcover the tender truth? alas! I fancied, vainly hoped, I was not *un*-beloved!—Yes, ungrateful as you have been! could nothing leſs than a *marriage* with my *uncle* * ſuffice?

—O pardon me, angelic woman! —pardon my frenzy—my raſhneſs, which could dare to arraign ſuch conſummate goodneſs.—What have I ſaid?—Sweet girl!—moſt proba-

* In the preſent diſtraction of Mr. Aſhley's ſoul, he concluded it was very probable ſhe might have heard at Aſhdale, that he was nephew to Mr. Branville.

bly

bly you were ſacrificed to your father's avarice:—forgive thy wretched Aſhley!——And will you too, my friend, forgive the mad effuſions of my heart, flowing to my pen, and filling that paper which I had dedicated to you? — *Miſery*, hopeleſs deſpair, muſt now be my everlaſting portion; for ſee you not, my Henry, the extent of my misfortune?—had this lovely woman married any *other* man than him, ſo nearly related to me by ties of blood, if death had deprived her of him, I might *then* poſſibly have hoped my conſtant affection might at laſt have been crowned with ſucceſs! — but *now*,

by *this* ill-fated *alliance*, every poſſibility, every ſhadow of hope is precluded: — her delicacy — the delicacy of an angel—would never wed with the *nephew* of her huſband; though certainly he ſtands in no *actual* conſanguinity with her.

You will, my kind friend, aſk what notice my capricious uncle took of me in this moſt intereſting viſit? —Even none;—he turned from me, on my entering the room, with a look of the moſt ſupercilious contempt imaginable. — What I have done, or what I have ſaid, is matter of the utmoſt aſtoniſhment to me, to have incurred ſo ſettled an averſion.

I find it extremely difficult, after having been bred in eaſe and affluence, ſurrounded by a number of ſervants, taught to believe I was the undoubted, and ſhould be the certain heir to upwards of three thouſand a year;—I ſay, I find it very difficult at once to *ſhrink* into the thouſand mortifications and perplexities, which muſt attend ſo very ſtraitened, narrow a pittance, as I have now for my ſupport; which is no more than a ſmall legacy left by a godfather:—not a ſingle ſhilling did my uncle beſtow on me, when he turned me adrift into a wide

wide world of difficulties;—nay, he even took my ſervant from me, who had long attended me: this, I own, hurt me, as I loved the poor fellow extremely; and he ſhed many tears at parting.

But nothing touches me ſo *nearly*, as that my *Emma* is at once raviſhed from me:—all—all elſe I could have borne; but this ſtroke unmans we wholly.

How will that hoard of charms, that bewitching ſweetneſs, be loſt—be buried in oblivion!—the preſent poſſeſſor of them cannot enough be ſenſible—(*he*, who holds the ſex

in

in very *low* eſtimation)—of the treaſure he is maſter of.

" Ah! what avails it, that ſubduing grace
" Faſhions her lovely form? of what avail
" That ſhe is gentle? Can her ingenuous
" breaſt,
" The ſoul of truth, unblemiſhed and
" ſerene,
" The bluſh of modeſty, the tender heart,
" Can they awake the icy hand of *Age?*
" O ſhe is lovely, and beloved!
" Her ſmile gives rapture to the ſoul.—
" Sure 'tis ſome hideous dream—
" Some horrid fantaſy, that haunts my ſoul
" With images of woe!—O that it were
" A tranſient fantaſy! too well my heart
" Feels her misfortune—feels the dreadful
" truth,
" That Emma's loſt to *love* and happi-
" neſs."

I have not yet *quite* determined how I ſhall beſtow myſelf, to gain by my induſtry ſome little livelihood: —ſometimes I think of entering on board a ſhip, and ſetting ſail for the Eaſt Indies, from whence I will never return to ſee ——— Ah, Sackville!—I will not repeat her name. —At other times I am much inclined to enter a volunteer to ſerve my king and country, and ſo by death to end my life and ſufferings together.

Let me, however, have your advice:—at preſent I am ſo *unhinged* by this late *unexpected* ſight of *the angel*

angel (ah! would I could change the little monoſyllable *the* to *my!*) that I can reſolve upon nothing.

"O, I am nought but love, tumult, de-
"ſpair!"

Adieu—adieu!

Your faithful,

but half-diſtracted

Edward Aſhley.

WE will now enquire after the fate of the poor unfortunate ſiſters:—For ſome time they had been diſcarded by their laſt keepers, and had been what is called "*on the*

"*town,*"

" *town*," and owed their wretched ſupport of a miſerable being to caſual proſtitution:—they now fully experienced all the horrors of poverty; for diſeaſe, the certain conſequence of ſuch a deplorable way of life, had obliged them to part with every garment they had in the world, excepting what was merely on their backs:—not a trinket had they now left, ſave one little garnet ring, the gift at parting of their *once* intimate and ſtill *revered* Emma Harvey: (for ſhe appeared, to theſe poor, loſt girls, as a *being* of ſome ſuperior order):—this little ring, in the inſide of which was engraved

theſe

theſe ſtriking words, "*Remember a* "*friend,*" was often looked on, whilſt a tear of fond remembrance (at the recollection of what they *once* were, and *now* were ſunk to) would ſteal down their languid cheeks.

"Patty (ſaid the poor Peggy, who one day with haggard eyes had been intently gazing on the above little memento of friendſhip) "if "my wretched exiſtence ſhould be "finiſhed ſooner than thine, do "not, I conjure you, do not part, "on the laſt emergency of diſ-"treſs, with this invaluable gift of "our angelic — our *ſpotleſs* Em-

"ma.

" ma.—When the cold hand of
" death arreſts this ſhattered frame
" of mine, I will hold this ring—
" this *little* ring to my heart, in
" the laſt ſtruggles of fainting na-
" ture."

" But what" (ſaid Patty) " can
" we now do for preſent ſup-
" port?"

" What *can be* done" (returned her ſiſter, ſighing) " without mo-
" ney—without cloaths, or friend?
" —who will receive us into their
" houſes?—who will employ us?
" —*miſerable* as we are!—no friend
" —no character to recommend
" us!——No—no, my ſiſter—'tis

" in

" in death—death alone, that we " can find a refuge: — the grave " will receive us — there will our " ſhame and ſorrows be all bu- " ried." —— In this mournful diſ-courſe, with many a heart-rending ſigh, did theſe poor unfortunates, weeping in each other's arms, ſpend often their wretched hours, when they had crept up to their ſordid garret,

" Sore pierc'd by wintry winds."——

Ah! gentle reader, how many at this *preſent moment* are experienc-ing the above miſeries — *caſt out* to periſh in the ſtreets. — Alas! they

once were innocent.—No father now protects, — no mother's arms now ſhield her *once* dear child: — but forgotten, ſhunned, deteſted, diſeaſe and famine muſt at length cloſe the ſad ſcene.

O ye daughters of wealth and eaſe, who are now repoſing in your elegant apartments, or glittering at a midnight ball, liſtening with greedy pleaſure perhaps to the very ſeducers of the above unhappy victims; did you but know for one moment the miſeries ye might relieve, the further ruin ye might prevent, by the diſtribution of a few guineas properly beſtowed on

ſome (far be it from me to ſay *all*) unfortunate young creatures, like our poor Peggy and Patty, who have been drawn into ſeduction by *arts* which elude the moſt virtuous circumſpection; did you but know the refined delight, I repeat, of relieving thoſe pitiable *outcaſts*, who, in the emphatical words of ſacred writ, "have no place to flee to," —you would then acknowledge, that compaſſion ſhewn to the unfortunate (not *ſo* from their *own levity*, but from a train of infamous ſeduction) is the ſweeteſt of all virtuous ſenſations!

 Pardon,

Pardon, good reader, this ſmall digreſſion, which is meant not to be an *advocate* for *vice*, but to ſave from further violence ruined *innocence*.

But to return to the poor ſiſters: —With the laſt ſhilling they had in the world they wandered about ſome of the villages near London, and at length were got about as far as ten miles from the metropolis; — they entered a pleaſant village, and being faint, ſtopped at the houſe of a poor woman to beg a glaſs of cold water; whilſt they were drinking it, they eſpied at a ſmall diſtance a magnificent

magnificent ſeat, ſurrounded with a fine park;—merely by chance, theſe unhappy wanderers enquired who it belonged to.——"The gentleman's "name" (ſaid the woman) "is Bran-"ville—it is called Aſh-grove."

"Branville!" (exclaimed they both, ſtruck with the name, which they remembered, as before mentioned, to have read accidentally in a news-paper as that of the man their beloved friend Emma had married)—"Branville!" (ſaid they) "pray "who did he marry?"——"The "ſweeteſt-tempered young lady, "and the beſt in the world" (ſaid the woman)—"her name was

" Harvey :—I have a daughter lives
" houſe-maid at Aſh-grove, ſo I
" hear enough of Madam Bran-
" ville's goodneſs :—O ſhe is an
" angel upon earth !"

At this moment a thought inſtantaneouſly occurred to the unhappy girls :—but what that thought *was*, the following letter from Mrs. Branville to her fair friend in London, will beſt explain.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

Mrs. Branville to Mrs. Summers.

Aſh-grove.

O My Lucy! what an affecting ſcene have I met with!—The poor unfortunate girls, my *once* dear Peggy and Patty, have been at the very village at the end of our park—have applied to me for relief; and I, wretch that I am! through the poſitive commands of Mr. Branville, joined to a former ſolemn but ridiculous promiſe I made both him and my father, had it not in my power to afford them ſuccour.—Heavens! do I live to

write this?—what I!—to renounce — to ſhun relief to the deareſt friends I had on earth!—the companions of my prattling infancy,—the comfort of my riper years!—and yet I——O, my friend, language is inſufficient to expreſs what I feel on this trying occaſion.

Yes, my dear, they have been (driven I ſuppoſe by extreme neceſſity) wandering about this village;—their attire, as well as their emaciated appearance (as I am informed) beſpeaking "*variety of* "*wretchedneſs.*"

Ah! who knows to what *deſpair has* by this time driven them!—

and

and what cutting anguiſh muſt they feel that *their Emma*, their much-loved friend, abounding as ſhe does in every luxury and ſuperfluity of life, ſhould reject, renounce, forget them!—I am almoſt diſtracted with this reflection!—my tears flow too faſt to let me proceed.———A fit of weeping has in ſome ſmall meaſure relieved my oppreſſed heart!

Lucy, who knows but that, after all, theſe poor unfortunate girls may *not* perhaps be ſo culpable as we believe them to be?—or who knows what *arts* may have been made uſe of?—O, I ſhudder at the thought!—Mr. Branville (my dear)

in

in this matter (though undoubtedly a worthy man) yet has been too ſcrupulous, too ſevere: — and I, fool that I have been, to be *drawn in* to make ſo abſurd a vow! — And yet, how could I help it?—*Appearances, ſuch* as they have been, *againſt* theſe wretched girls, were quite ſufficient to reconcile me to what I ſo raſhly vowed:—but ah! my weak heart,—to *know* that they have been ſo near — without food — without ſhelter,—O anguiſh inſupportable! But I forget that I am all this time keeping you in ſuſpenſe, with reſpect to the melancholy incident, which has made me thus wretched:

—this

—this it was, my friend. On Monday laſt, as Mr. Branville and I were walking in the park, a poor middle-aged woman came up to me, and humbly requeſted I would be ſo good to read a paper ſhe had in her hand, ſealed up: "The diſtreſs "of the writers, madam" (ſaid ſhe) "is great." — On her mentioning the word *diſtreſs*, I heſitated not to take the paper in my hand. — (I ſhould have told you, Mr. Branville was at ſome little diſtance from me at this minute, ſpeaking to ſome workmen.) — On opening this paper, I found theſe heart-rending words:

"If

" If miſery and deep remorſe " can merit pity, the owners of the " incloſed *little* ring humbly pre- " ſume to ſupplicate *charity*, if it " be poſſible that ſtill the names " are remembered of the wretched

and *Peggy* / *Patty* *Summers.*"

O Lucy! I thought I ſhould have ſunk into the earth, on reading the above, which was written in my poor Peggy's hand;—and my heart almoſt died within me, when I found, wrapt in ſeveral ſmall bits of paper (incloſed in the letter) a little garnet *ring* I gave the dear girls at parting; on which is engraved theſe words, " *Remember a friend.*" Gueſs what I felt,

I felt, on ſeeing this little *ſacred* memorial of friendſhip!—I gave it the evening before the poor wanderers left Aſhdale; and I well recollect the *ſprightly* innocence, the *lively* air, with which they received it; ſaying, "Emma, you will not forget *this token*, if ever we produce it."—Painful remembrance, how doſt thou diſtract me!

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed I—and was juſt going to aſk the woman where the writers of that note were, when inſtantly Mr. Branville (having ſeen a letter delivered to me) came up with haſty ſteps: he ſaw the letter open in my hand, and

ſnatched

ſnatched it eagerly ;—indeed, could I have *ſecreted* it, I would *not* ; for what muſt he have thought, to have ſeen me hiding the contents from him ? — He immediately read this fatal billet : when, raiſing his voice in a paſſion of anger, he violently exclaimed, " Good God ! Mrs. " Branville, is it poſſible that you " will receive a letter from two " common proſtitutes ? — I never " could have believed this :—this " indeed exceeds all belief !—And " who" (ſaid he to the woman, who ſtood ſhaking with fear) " who " are *you*, that dare to come about " my houſe, with ſuch an infamous " letter ?"

" letter?"—here he ſhook his cane over the poor woman's head, who, terrified to death, fell proſtrate on her knees before him.—" As to you, " *madam*" (turning to me) " you " promiſed your father, you pro- " miſed me, you for ever *renounced* " any farther connexion with theſe " abandoned huſſies, who are a diſ- " grace to" —— " I call Heaven " to witneſs" (ſaid I, trembling and burſting into tears) " that I am " innocent of this matter;—neither " could I *divine* from whom the let- " ter came!"—" Good God" (ſaid he, in high anger) " do you then " receive and open letters from " whom

" whom you know not? can a wo-
" man of *delicacy* act in ſuch a man-
" ner? I am amazed!—How dare
" theſe impudent wretches have
" the effrontery to addreſs you, or
" to ſuppoſe that you would ever
" ſo much as hear even their names
" mentioned in your preſence, or
" in that of any other lady of *deli-*
" *cacy*; much leſs to write to you!
" I make a very ſerious matter of
" this—and I muſt uſe the authority
" of an huſband, to deſire you
" forthwith to walk up to your
" chamber.——I will have no let-
" ters brought from *proſtitutes!*—
" Where are theſe wicked huſſies?"

ſaid

ſaid he to the woman :—with whom I left him; and weeping bitterly, and indeed terrified at my huſband's paſſion, with ſlow ſteps walked to the houſe, and aſcended my chamber; where, throwing myſelf on my bed, I gave way to a moſt violent fit of grief. Norris, my woman, (who has often heard from me the hiſtory of the wretched girls) ſoon found, by my exclamations, what had happened: — ſhe gave me drops and water, which ſomewhat revived me. —In about two hours Mr. Branville came up; I was ſtill on my bed; he ſeated himſelf by me, and entered into a long harangue on

the imprudence of my opening the note; on the ſacred promiſe I had given, never to have further connection with theſe *wicked* huſſies, (as he called them) &c.—but I am not going, my Lucy, to give you his long diſcourſe verbatim; ſuffice it to ſay, it laſted near *three* hours; in which he fully expatiated on the *delicacy*, (his favourite word) honour, virtue, &c. &c. of our ſex; the infamy of proſtitutes, &c.

I leave you to judge what a night I ſpent;—had I been inclined to reſt, Mr. Branville rendered it impoſſible, as, when he was not ſleeping, he was continually reſuming the ſad

ſubject

ſubject of the preceding day, and expatiating on the crime of breaking the *promiſe* I had made to him, and to my father.——Fatal promiſe!—O, that I had never made it!

The next morning I found myſelf very poorly in health; owing to the extreme inquietude of my ſpirits:—which were rendered even worſe, by the following afflicting particulars I gathered from my faithful Norris.—She informed me, that the Monday evening, juſt as the glimmering of the moon, then riſing, gave light enough to diſcern objects, the under gardener obſerved, as he was walking near the head

of the reſervoir pond, in the moſt ſolitary part of the park, two young women, who arm in arm walked for ſome minutes on the banks of the pond; that they often ſtopped as if muſing:—Thomas the gardener, imagining, he ſaid, that they (whoever they were) had ſome *bad* thoughts in their heads, ſtood behind a tree, for the purpoſe of watching them:—at length they ſat down by the ſide of the water.—(O my Lucy, how did I ſhudder, to hear this dreadful account!)

It *could* be no other than our poor girls!—Thomas ſays, he watched them near an hour; when the night grew

grew ſo dark and cloudy (a ſhower coming on) that he no longer could diſcern them; but a man he met the next morning, on mentioning this, told him two young creatures had been ſeen wandering about that morning on Aſh-grove common, and that he ſaw them go into a very ſordid hut there.

O, my friend! had theſe unhappy girls committed the raſh action that the gardener apprehends they were going to do, I never more could have known a moment's peace, or even held up my head, ſo much ſhould I have been convinced

my *ſeeming inhumanity* was the occaſion of it.

Norris has wonderfully pleaſed me, as ſhe tells me, that on Tueſday night, hearing the poor wretches had been ſeen wandering about the common, and that they went into a little cottage there, ſhe made up a * bundle of apparel, linen, &c. into which ſhe put two guineas, and

* If it ſhould here be aſked why this good woman ſhould run the riſque of her maſter's diſpleaſure by relieving the wretched girls?—it is neceſſary to inform the reader, that both their worthy father and mother were well known to Mrs. Norris, on which account ſhe would have done her utmoſt endeavours to have aſſiſted them.

cauſed it to be laid where ſhe imagined they might meet with it; directed to Miſs Summers: — but, alas! they either found it not, or would not take it, for there the parcel remained after they were ſeen going from the village. — O, my dear, how do theſe accounts of the *wandering* girls diſtreſs and agitate my mind! — would it pleaſe Heaven to take them in mercy to itſelf! — but what would I ſay?

You will, my Lucy, I know, love my worthy Norris for her kind conſideration in this diſtreſſing matter. She has ſince been making all poſſible enquiry after the poor

wretches; as, could they be found, who knows, my friend, but that they *might return* to *virtue!*—could they have been traced from this village, ſo as that your good huſband might hear of them, and ſhelter them from further miſery, it would be a moſt deſirable event.

We ſet out to-morrow for the Abbey;—I only regret leaving Aſhgrove, as I was in hopes of ſeeing you again here.—I wiſh the journey, and a change of ſcene, may amuſe my oppreſſed ſpirits.

Pray Heaven *poor* Mr. Aſhley may not be in the neighbourhood of the Abbey!

Write

Write to me ſoon, very ſoon, I conjure you; for I need the *conſolation* of friendſhip: — theſe *wretched girls* have fluttered my weak heart beyond deſcription.

Adieu! — be aſſured, my Lucy, of the conſtant affection of

Your

Emma B——.

THE compaſſionate reader may here, perhaps, wiſh to know whither the poor ſiſters bent their courſe, after having been for ſome days wandering in the environs of

Aſh-

Aſh-grove.—The worthy miniſter's wife of the next pariſh, on meeting them, as ſhe was walking with a certain lady of quality in that neighbourhood, as eminent for her exalted charity as her cultivated underſtanding, on their applying to her for a ſmall trifle to carry them to London, aſked them a few queſtions.—She found, as did the noble lady ſhe was walking with, that they were in the utmoſt diſtreſs;—*that* was a ſufficient recommendation to the excellent Lady C------, and ſhe generouſly gave them half a guinea;—the poor girls burſt into tears, and moſt emphatically exclaimed,

claimed, " God bleſs your lady-
" ſhip!"

Lady C------ remarked to her companion, that they were fine young women. — " What pity!" (ſaid ſhe.)—" I fear," (returned her friend) " they are not ſo good, " (wandering about in idleneſs) as " they ſhould be; your ladyſhip " was very *kind* to relieve them." ——" No matter what they are," (replied Lady C------) " it is ſuffi-
" cient to me that they appeared " emaciated with *want*; — *charity* " does not adopt its objects."

This unexpected ſupply of *half a guinea*, which to the wretched ſiſ-

ters

ters ſeemed an inexhauſtible ſum, on their arrival in London enabled them to hire a ſmall hole, part of a garret, for the enſuing week :—but, alas ! the exceſſive *ſhock*,—the grief, they had ſuſtained in their once-loved Emma's total *(ſuppoſed) neglect* of them, had almoſt driven them diſtracted.—The joy, the *unexpected* happy hopes they naturally conceived, when they were told at Aſhgrove Mrs. Branville was then at her ſeat, on the very ſpot, opened a gleam of comfort to their oppreſſed minds, they had long been ſtrangers to : — the diſappointment of theſe hopes was almoſt death to them,

them, eſpecially as the woman who carried their letter to Mrs. Branville, did *not* at all *ſoften* the aſperity of Mr. Branville's *really inhuman* meſſage: — they were indeed ſtimulated to the deed of deſperation ſuſpected by the gardener at Aſh-grove; but by the ſudden interpoſition of Providence, they were reſtrained from compleating their deſign, and were reſerved for future trials.

Peggy, the very day of their aſcending their garret in London, through exceſs of grief and fatigue, was ſeized with a fever: — Patty hung over her with unutterable anguiſh,

guiſh, inceſſantly crying, " What " ſhall I get for thee ?—What ſhall " I do for thee, — my *poor* ſiſter ?" ——" Procure me *death*," (returned ſhe) — " 'tis *that* alone can eaſe " my torments." — Perhaps at this period a more diſtreſſing ſcene could not be exhibited than theſe wretched girls. — Peggy lay delirious in a burning fever for ſeveral days, raving continually on her Emma, and often miſtaking Patty for her ;— whilſt her miſerable ſiſter, with the few ſhillings they had remaining, was nurſing her with unabated tenderneſs — procuring a few ineffectual medicines — holding her aching

ing head — or kiſſing her burning cheek.—Ah! reader, let us *examine* the wretched receptacles about this great metropolis, and I fear we ſhall ſee many, — many objects in nearly the ſame pitiable condition! Let us *relieve* them: — let us apply the balmy hand of comfort to ſuſtain their miſeries. — But to return to our hiſtory——

One day, when Patty believed her ſiſter to be juſt fallen into a ſlumber, ſhe ſtole out to procure a little bread and milk; and meeting with a perſon ſhe knew, was detained longer than uſual from her Peggy; who, immediately on the departure

parture of her ſiſter, happening to awake, and ſeeing paper and ink near her wretched bed, wrote in her delirious ſtate a moſt affecting epiſtle to her beloved Emma;—with the *rapidity* which ever attends the delirium of a fever, ſhe wrote the letter, and the woman of the houſe juſt after coming to her, ſhe begged her to convey it to the poſt-houſe, which the woman did, imagining it to be a letter that Patty had written.—Peggy having now almoſt exhauſted her whole little ſhare of ſtrength, inſenſibly dropt into a ſweet ſlumber, in which her ſiſter found her. — The letter was directed to

Aſh-grove; at which place it arrived: Mrs. Branville was then ſet out for their ſeat in Wales, but it was forwarded to her. — The effect this epiſtle had on that amiable lady, with the letter itſelf, will be ſhewn in the following one to Mrs. Summers in London.

LETTER XXVI.

From Mrs. Norris to Mrs. Summers.

St. Maud's Abbey,
North-Wales.

MADAM,

MY poor lady being too ill to write herſelf, has ordered me to ſend the encloſed letter to you,

which has given her inexpreſſible anguiſh :—you will ſee, madam, it is from the unfortunate Miſs Summers. — Luckily, my maſter was from home when it arrived, on a journey of ſome days into South-Wales :—I ſay *luckily*, as you know, madam, how ſevere he is, in his judgment, on the unfortunate *party* concerned ; as well as how angry he has been with my poor lady, about what happened at Aſh-grove.—One would imagine, madam, from the ſtrange contents of the encloſed, that poor Miſs Peggy (how my heart yearns for her ! for alas ! I knew her from a child) ſhould be

out of her ſenſes.—It is all ſo ſadly unaccountable, and diſtreſſing to ſuch a degree, that my poor lady fainted on reading it; and yeſterday was ſo ill, as not to be able to riſe from her bed.—She was very feverish laſt night;—but good Mrs. Belmont thinks her rather better this morning.

The encloſed letter, madam, will however enable you to gueſs, how the diſtracted contents of it muſt amaze and afflict my dear lady. She thinks, if theſe unhappy friends could be *adverti*ſ*ed*, it might be the means of diſcovering the place of their abode; but this ſhe ſubmits to

Mr. Summers's and your opinion. She ſends her beſt love.—And, hoping, good madam, you will excuſe this haſty writing, I beg leave to ſubſcribe myſelf,

Your moſt obedient,
humble ſervant
to command,
Martha Norris.

P. S. My lady begs you, madam, not to be alarmed about her, as ſhe ſays ſhe is better;—and ſhe certainly is ſo.—It was a happy thing my maſter was from home, when the ſad letter arrived here.

The LETTER *enclosed in the preceding one.*

Peggy Summers to Mrs. Brawville.

——AND could you indeed, my Emma, think I had forgot and renounced *you!*—No, no, no!—I never could forget my Emma, when she stood shivering at my gate, pinched with hunger,—without a friend,—without a place to rest her head.—Well, but what had I to say to you?—Confusion, and grief, and shame, all crowd so fast upon me—and my poor brain is quite gone.—Oh now I have it:—when did you see my poor parents, Emma Harvey?—Harvey!

no—no—you are married—*honourably married:*—you are an angel of light:—you dazzle me with the glory that ſurrounds you.—See! ſee! an angel crowns my *ſpotleſs friend*—whilſt I——no more of that—no more of that.—Friend!—who talks of friends?—I have none,—no friend.

Emma, are you happy?—tell me—tell your own Peggy.—I hope your huſband is *kind*—is *tender to you.*—Well, but about my poor parents;—be ſure don't tell them of our hard fate;—it will break their hearts—indeed it will.—The *crumbs* which fell from the rich

man's

man's table would have been joyfully accepted. — Heavens! could I have thought it?—but no matter, no matter.

O Emma, how I long to lay my aching head in your dear boſom! —I could tell you ſtrange—ſtrange things — of ſuch *ſtratagems!* ſuch vile *arts!* ſuch — but you cry, "Avaunt! avaunt!" — and drive your poor ſhivering Peggy from you:—ah! there diſtraction lies!

Have you quite forgot Aſhdale, my Emma, now that you are a lady, a *fine*, rich lady?—Do you remember the little ſtile in the wood? —and the hazle copſe where we pro-

procured our nuts?—and the roſe-buſh I planted with my own hands, that you promiſed to cheriſh for my ſake?—Yes, yes, you muſt have forgot all this; for you know you forgot the little *garnet ring* you gave at parting—*quite forgot it.*

Your Patty is not the lively girl ſhe was when we uſed to meet you in the wood;—no longer the roſe blooms in her cheek;—all pale and emaciated:—my poor Patty will ſoon be—cold—as I ſhall be.—One grave, remember, holds us;—a *little* grave, no matter where;—but yet methinks I could wiſh, if not too *great* a *favour*, to requeſt, that in

Aſh-grove church-yard we might ſleep for ever:—and then, my Emma, when you *proudly* ſtep out of your *fine gilt coach*, and paſs by the green graſs turf that wraps our cold clay, will you not drop *one* pitying tear, my Emma?—*No*—*no*, not you indeed:—you will walk proudly on—and, whilſt the *great* Mr. Branville enquires whoſe *little* new-made grave that is,—you will ſlightly anſwer, "No matter whoſe:" or perhaps tell him, "There lie "two abandoned girls,—but they "*once* were *innocent*."—*Abandoned* we are, 'tis true—by our beſt and only *friend*.

Alas!

Alas! you could not know us *now*;—ſharp miſery has worn us to the bone;—want—want, my Emma, has ſorely afflicted us:—we would work for you, we would weed your *fine* gardens, we would ſpin thread for your linen:—but, no—no, you will not employ us.—O my poor brain—how doſt thou torment me!

Thanks to Heaven, however, we did not commit the *raſh* action—our floating corpſes would have remained *un*-buried for Mr. Branville, I believe:—don't you think ſo, Emma? Well, well,—but let him be as unkind to us as he will—thank God he

he is not a *lord*:—deteſtable, vile!—I could tell you ſtrange things;—but alas! I muſt now conclude; for I grow weary;—faint,—and O my aching *head!*—but what is that to my *heart?* ah, *there* the ſtroke is *moſt* ſeverely felt!

I ſometimes dream I am in heaven, ſitting by the ſide of my angelic friend:—yes—yes, I *will* call you *friend*;—and help yourſelf as you can.

No matter from whence I write this;—perhaps from the ſtreets.—But no,—I have forgot,—I have, 'tis true, a covering from the bleak wind and rain.

Emma,

Emma, this will be my laſt letter.——Fare you well, my love:—God bleſs you!—God bleſs you!

I once was

Peggy Summers,

now, no matter whom.

End of the Third Volume.

4 DE 58

et-

m.